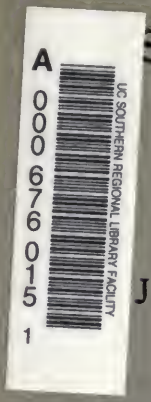
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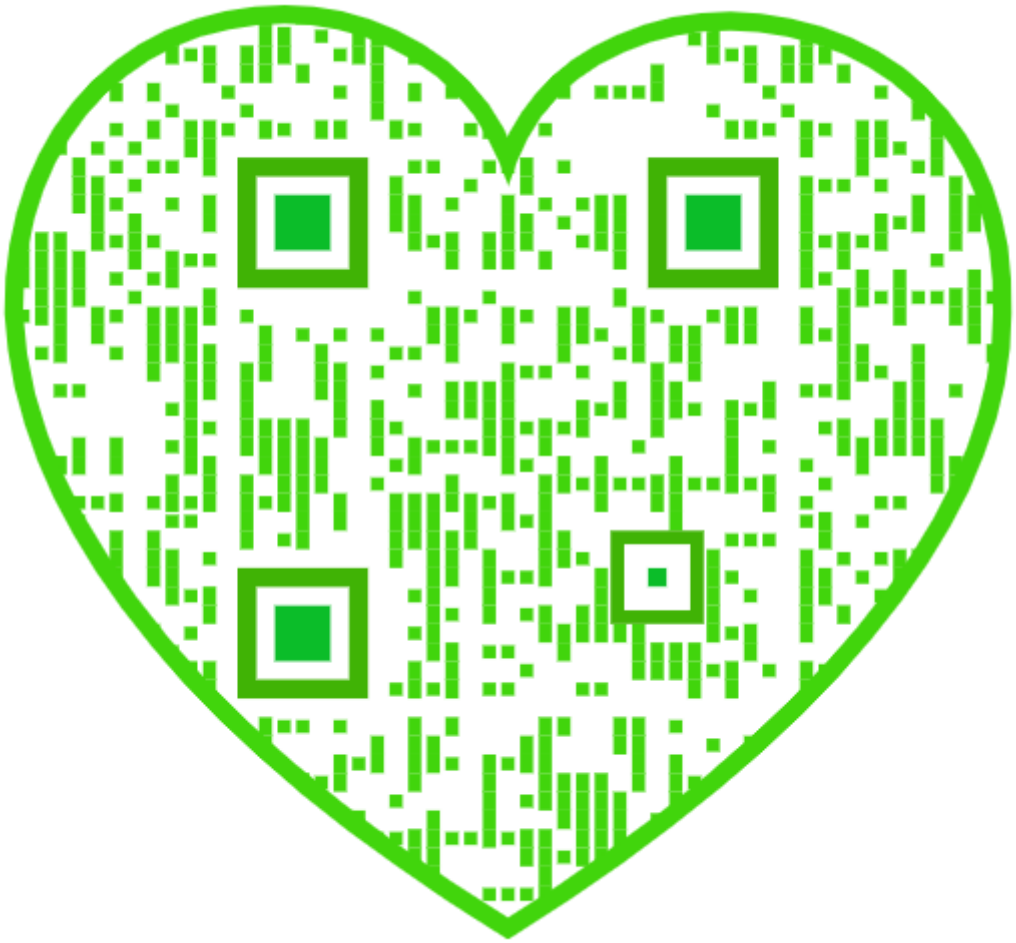
SKETCHING FROM NATURE IN LINE AND TONE

By

J. LITTLEJOHNS, R.B.A., R.B.C., A.R.W.A.



SKETCHING FROM NATURE IN LINE AND TONE

BY

J. LITTLEJOHNS, R.B.A., A.R.B.C.

(Author of the 'Art for All' Drawing and Painting Series, 'Art in Schools,' etc.)

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INTRODUCTION

A SKETCH from nature may be drawn for several different purposes, and the particular purpose will largely determine the character of the sketch. The nature-lover may desire no more than a topographical note to remind him of an interesting experience. The student may require a more detailed study as part of his training. The artist may draw the scene as a subject for a picture, or as material for future use.

Generally speaking the purpose of a sketch is not a detailed study, but a seizing of the essentials of line, tone, and construction—an addition to the stock of knowledge and a means of recalling impressions at a later date.

Few artists are able to invest their finished pictures with the freshness of the sketch. The comparatively unimportant facts obtrude and tend to hide the full significance of the fundamentals. The details of leaves and stems, roofs and stones, doors and windows, draw the attention from the sweeping lines, broad masses, and the underlying evidences of life and movement.

To all but the artist of vision and experience, the slight sketch is, more often than not, a delusion

and a snare. It suggests much, but it tells little. Unless the artist can fill in the gaps by knowledge, memory, or by other sketches, the vague note, however facile, tempts him to commence a picture which he cannot finish.

There is a common opinion that a quick sketch demands less skill and training than a completed drawing. The truth lies in the opposite direction. For the sketch is an expression, in comparatively few strokes, of many facts to be read between the lines. These remarks should not discourage the beginner, but rather stimulate him to study in such a way that his sketches may become the means of valuable service.

CHAPTER I

MATERIALS

MANY sketchers, professional as well as amateur, go through life unconscious of many of the materials they might enjoy: unaware of the sense of ease which comes of just the right pencil and paper to suit their personal tastes. There is a comfortable feeling of agreement between some papers and pencils—a condition which is communicated to the sketcher and the sketch. Too much emphasis can hardly be laid, right at the beginning, upon the necessity for those materials which help the sketcher to make his best sketch. As there is no best for all, every one must experiment for himself. Does he prefer a hard, medium, or soft pencil, a smooth, medium, or rough paper? If he wants to produce a hazy, suggestive, atmospheric drawing he may prefer a soft pencil and rough paper. If he is more mindful of definition he will select a smooth paper and probably a medium pencil. If he desires to combine definition with both delicacy and strength a smooth paper and three or four pencils of varying strength should meet his case. But no one prefers a gritty pencil with a point that breaks at the inspired moment, when a little extra pressure is applied, or a paper that does not 'take' the pencil readily.

Winsor & Newton's 'Winton' drawing pencils combine the three essential qualities of a good pencil; they have a silky texture, are easily

erased, and do not break easily. Of papers there is a wide selection varying from coarse hand-made papers, such as Whatman's, Arnold's, and R.W.S., especially made for water-colour, to the smoothest of all papers, Bristol Board. Among the various surfaces and thickness of satisfactory papers the selection is ample. It is only a matter of personal preference. The rubber should be very soft ; it soon goes, but it does its work well.

The sketching outfit deserves consideration. Every reasonable precaution should be taken to ensure comfort, so that the sketcher is aware of nothing but the pleasure of making the sketch. A stool that can be sat upon for an hour without unpleasant reminders will undoubtedly have a beneficial effect upon the quality, and the number, of the sketches. Uncontrollable circumstances produce so many impediments that no sketcher can afford to add to their number.

As early as possible it will be wise to settle on the method of carrying the paper ; whether in a sketch-book, or packed in a case. Personally, I prefer to take both—a small sketch-book that goes into a pocket easily, which I use to make rough preliminary notes to see how the subject can best be arranged, and a Hugh Leslie sketching portfolio. This arrangement seems to have everything in its favour. A large number of sheets of varying kinds can be carried ; sheets can be changed with ease : the paper is not affected by the wind, and the drawings do not get smudged and crumpled as they are apt to do in a sketch-book. Later, when any one sketch is needed while painting a picture of the subject, it can be taken from the collection with no risk of spoiling the others. The sketching case that is supplied with a strap has the additional advantage of

1
2
2B on Medium Surface
3
4
6B on Coarse Surface
5
6
7
8
9
10
6H
2H
HB
2B
4B
6B
Six degrees on Bristol Board

Plate I

leaving both hands free at any moment to sharpen a pencil. A quarter imperial size is large enough for most occasions, but when a good deal of detail has to be done, such as in some architectural drawings, a half imperial size may be called for. The information given at the end of this book contains all that can reasonably be desired.

CHAPTER II

HOW TO BEGIN

TEMPERAMENTS vary. Some want to start with great views that make the most experienced hesitate. Others want to practise beforehand at home to get used to the materials. Some fear to venture before they have copied other people's sketches in order to get a technique. It goes without saying that it is of little use for any one but a rare genius to commence sketching from nature until he has acquired a little technical skill, and some habits of correct observation, with resultant knowledge, of the differences between the real shapes of simple things and their appearances. Whoever cannot draw a flower-pot indoors cannot expect to draw a chimney-pot out of doors. All the problems involved in the drawing of a box or a brick had better be solved before attempting a house or a street. But as soon as the necessary preliminary training has been gone through it is better to go straight to nature without hesitation or forebodings. If you must begin at the difficult end, do so, but retire when convinced of your mistake. Most people err on the side of timidity, which is far worse.

A little preliminary practice in handling and in experimenting with various pencils and papers should certainly be done before attempting to sketch. It would be an absurd waste of time and effort to achieve a technical method by

Plate II

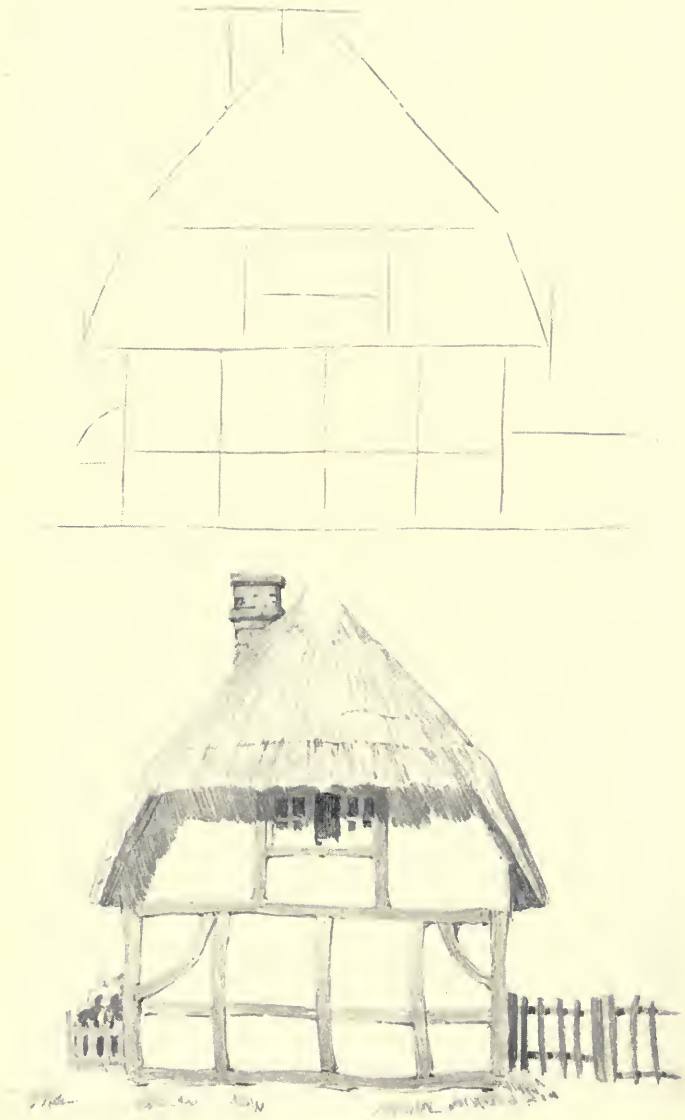


Plate III

aimless blundering or to trust to luck to hit upon suitable methods and materials by accident. Find out first what the medium can do, and then learn to do it efficiently and expressively as you sketch.

Broadly speaking, there are two ways of using a pencil : (1) by making separate lines of various thicknesses at various distances apart ; (2) by placing the lines close together so as to form a continuous tone. The first gives a suggestive description of form—a kind of shorthand—and is often all that can be done in the nature of representation when speed is required. When the lines are very fine and only slightly separated, an approach to actual representation is possible. The second way is much more nearly realistic, and if done with great care and precision may be almost photographic in its exactness of imitation. But most of the variety of obtainable effects arise out of the materials, i.e., the degrees of hardness or softness of the pencil and the smoothness or roughness of the paper.

Plate I gives several illustrations of what can be done and indicates the lines this preliminary practice and the necessary experiments should take. All the illustrations are full-sized reproductions.

Fig. 1 shows a number of strokes with a medium pencil (HB) upon a paper of medium surface. In Fig. 2 the same materials were used, but the lines were placed close together. The resulting tone is slightly granular, i.e., the lead does not cover the whole surface. Fig. 3 shows lines made with a very soft pencil (6B) on a very coarse paper. Here the lines are really a series of dots. Fig. 4 shows a tone made with the same materials. The effect is just like a chalk drawing or a lithograph. Figs. 5 to 10 were drawn on very

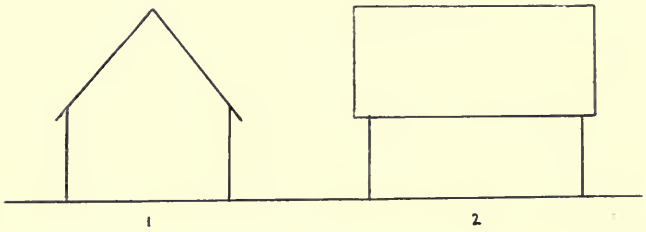
smooth paper (Bristol board) with 6H, 2H, HB, 2B, 4B, and 6B pencils respectively. In each case the result is as smooth as a wash: there is no visible granulation.

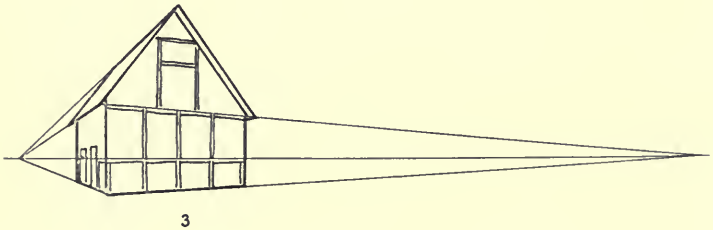
Plate II illustrates two of the ways just described. Figs 1 and 2 were drawn with a hard pencil (F) on a rather smooth paper, with clear separated lines as in a pen drawing. Figs. 3 and 4 were drawn on the same paper with a soft pencil (3B) on the same paper. The second pair give a somewhat realistic effect with a pleasant granular surface, while the first pair are only summarized descriptions.

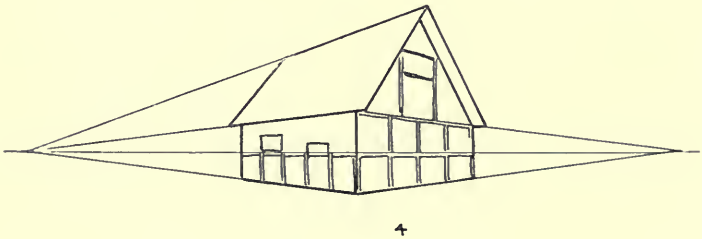
The four drawings of the trunk of a tree on Plate II were drawn with a very soft pencil (4B) on the coarsest Whatman's paper, and illustrates an admirable method for expressing bold effects and rugged surfaces. Plate XV, among several others, was drawn on smooth paper with four pencils of widely differing degrees. By this method, strength, refinement, and exact delineation can be carried to the greatest extent of which the medium is capable.

A few hours spent in trying these methods (not continuously, but occupying a few minutes at a time) will be of great help in deciding upon a technique. But the method or methods to be adopted finally should come after a good deal of actual sketching on the spot. From long experience I recommend every one to make several drawings in several styles as soon as possible after returning from sketching. Try two or three surfaces of paper and several degrees of pencils. Away from disturbing minor details, while the general impression is still strong, it is often easier to decide upon the most suitable treatment, and, what is more important, such experiments give confidence to future efforts.

Plate IV







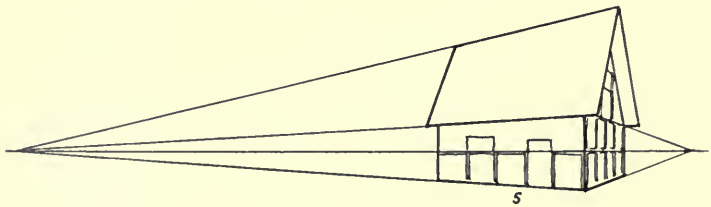


Plate V

I shall assume that most readers prefer to begin with simple 'bits' that call for less skill than perseverance. Nearly every one seems to want to commence operations in a quiet country village with quaint cottages, a church, a bridge, some farm buildings, and other charming characteristics of English rural life. For that reason, I propose, first, to take an imaginary village containing all that is necessary to show how to sketch what one is likely to find in such a place, study the details in progressive order of difficulty and afterwards to arrange them to suit pictorial purposes. These sketches will be made in various ways, partly because the method suits the subject, but principally to help the reader, by demonstration, to select methods for himself.

Plate II consists of four drawings of two simple subjects, which, for several reasons, will serve as an excellent start for the beginner, and at the same time is worthy of the attention of the experienced. A collection of sketches of such subjects make very valuable material for use later on. Introduced into a dull part of an otherwise unsatisfactory picture it may give just that touch of interest and variety needed. Features of this kind should be sketched from several points of view. Whenever another bit of railings is found, note its similarities to, and differences from, those already studied, draw them from memory, and try to construct others. The railings in Plate II were not copied from nature; they were added to and reconstructed from knowledge gained by many sketches.

Just now, however, the main reason for selecting such a subject is that it can be made a means of gaining confidence and freedom of handling unimpeded by difficulties in drawing. It matters little if the shape is not correctly

copied providing the drawing serves its principal purpose.

From the beginning, however, regard this and every drawing as something to be used in a picture. Try to fit little bits of landscape or some other harmonious features round it as shown in Plate II ; however clumsily it is done at first it is necessary practice. Try it several times, at every opportunity, and whenever an idea occurs. In short, draw constructively, imaginatively, and expressively from the first sketch.

After a few more sketches of this kind try a cottage, a barn, or a shed ; not necessarily a whole one. Take the easiest view to draw, involving no problems in perspective, and choose, for preference, an uneven and rather dilapidated specimen, always providing that it is interesting. This selection is not recommended entirely for artistic reasons. A new cottage may be beautiful and many old ones are ugly ; but choose it for the same reason that prompted the choice of the railings. A regular object generally looks all wrong if it is not drawn all right, but one such as that shown in Plate III can be made a pleasant means of practice in expressiveness and a basis for experiment before proceeding to the sterner business of exact delineation. This is not to be taken as an encouragement to shirk difficulties, but to approach them in due order, and to guard against that worst of all evils in the early days —dullness.

The end of a cottage on Plate III is illustrated in two stages. The first stage shows how the general proportions and the positions of the parts are determined before attempting any detail. On Plate IV there are some studies of parts taken from this and from other cottages of a similar kind in the same village. It often happens that

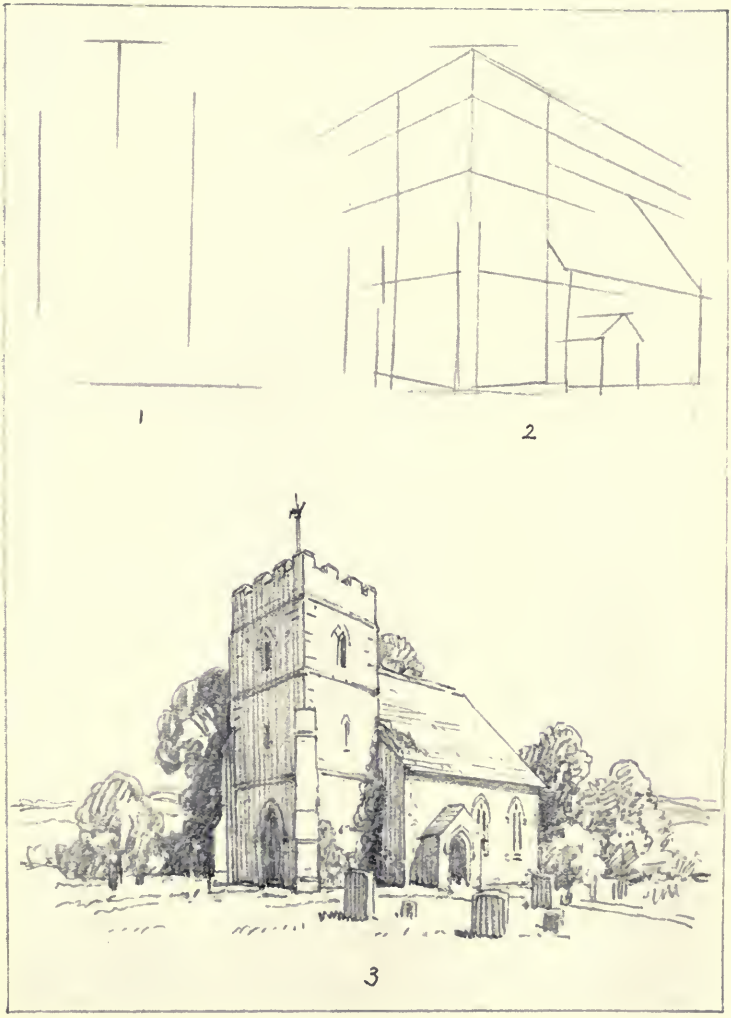


Plate VI

Plate VII

an interesting window or a doorway or a bit of timber work remains in a house that has otherwise been ruined for the sketcher's purpose; but that is no reason why jewels which can be introduced into more suitable settings should be passed by. A collection of sketches of, say, cottage windows, such as shown in Plate IV, will be invaluable especially if it has reached the memory by way of the sketch-book. The best permanent sketch-book is the memory.

The sketcher should be always on the look-out for adaptable and convertible material. He should learn, too, by constant experiment, to be able to modify his sketches without losing their character—making them longer or shorter, wider or narrower, sinking them further into the wall, or bringing them out to the surface—anything and everything to enlarge his powers of making the best use of the materials. Mere copying leads nowhere—the expression of personal attitudes is the only goal worth striving for, and the inner eye of the sketcher should always be upon that goal.

CHAPTER III

DRAWING

BY this time the sketcher should be ready and willing to take the business of drawing with becoming seriousness and determination. For it must now be obvious that he can go little further without a working knowledge of a few of the fundamentals of perspective. He may be able to draw the front of a house or the end, but what of the views between ? And even if he did manage to draw any view correctly without any knowledge of perspective, he would still be greatly handicapped, owing to an oft-recurring need. It often happens that a church, or a house, or a bridge, would look better if it were slightly turned in another direction, and it would be an absurd limitation to be unable to do so for the lack of a little easily gained knowledge.

Take, for example, the cottage of which the end has just been studied. Stated diagrammatically, its general form is as shown in Plate V ; the end view as in Fig. 1 and the front view as in Fig. 2. These two views involve no fore-shortening except in the roof of No. 2, which is very slight. How are we to draw any of the views between the end view and the side view ?

First walk round so as to see it in each position, and as you walk note two things : (1) the changes in the relative widths of the front and the end, (2) the changes in the directions as well as the length of the lines where the house meets

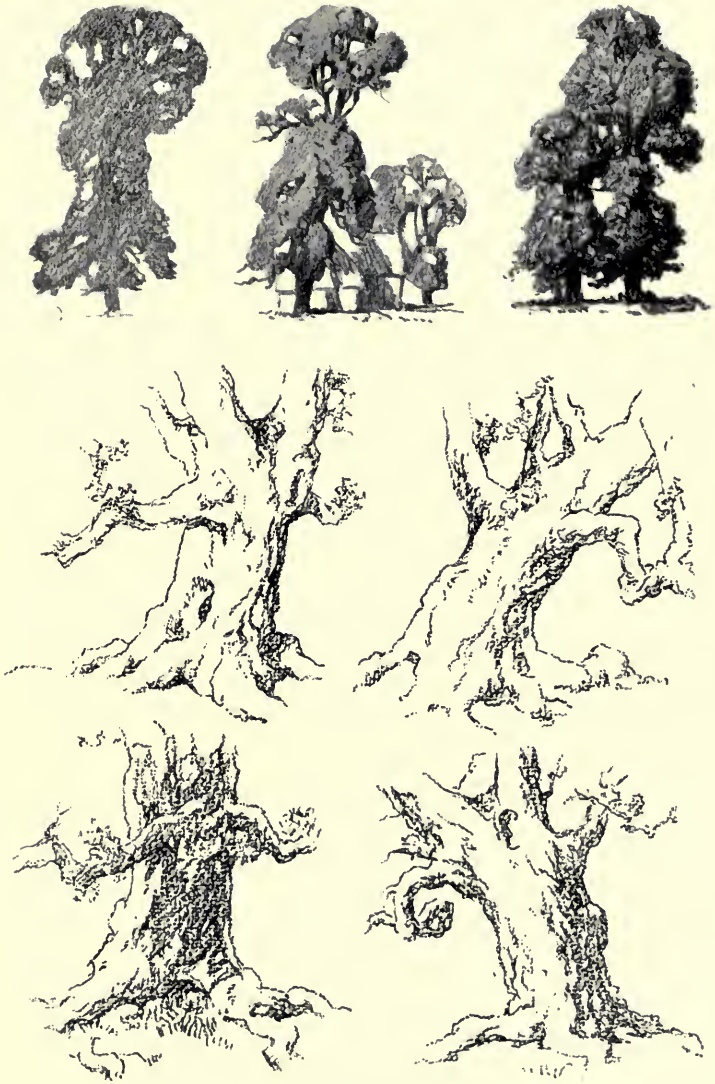


Plate VIII

Plate IX

the ground. You will then realize that the more that is seen of the side the less of the end, and vice versa, and that the more nearly the front is seen as its true shape the more nearly do horizontal lines, such as the ground line, the top and bottom of the roof, and the top of the door, appear to be horizontal. Walking from left to right you see successive views as in Figs. 3 to 5. But how much should these horizontal lines incline at any given position? Fortunately in this house there is a horizontal line of woodwork across the front and end just at the normal height of the spectator's eye when sitting—about 3 ft. 6 in. from the ground. Sit down and look at this line, from different positions. Note that whatever its length it always appears to be horizontal. This one fact gives the cue to the drawing of all large rectangular objects, viz.: all horizontal receding lines tend to meet on the eye level. Having thus determined the 'vanishing points,' as they are called, the rest of the construction is mainly mechanical.

There is no space here to go further into this important aspect of sketching. The serious sketcher should consult some books, such as 'Perspective applied to landscape,' by Rex Vicat Cole, which gives the key to every problem that is likely to arise. He should learn to draw any simple form of house, bridge, church, road, and the like, in any position, from knowledge, and not be completely dependent upon the thing seen.

Apart from this scientific aspect, the following suggestion as to a method of drawing formal objects will save much time and india-rubber. Plate VI shows the progress of a drawing of a church. (1) Be absolutely certain of the two outside measurements—the greatest height and the greatest width, AB and CD. Thus enclosing the drawing in an imaginary rectangle (2) determine

the position of the principal points which touch this rectangle. (3) Find the exact inclination of two horizontal lines going in different directions and extend them if there is room on the paper till they meet the horizontal eye-line. (4) The rest which naturally follows is mechanical. Revise again and again till there is no flaw. This done, the details are largely a matter of time and taste.

It is not necessary—indeed it would probably be harmful—to study the laws of pictorial composition at this stage. But do not postpone attempts to compose for yourself. Put things together as they best please you. If of two arrangements you prefer one it is probably the better composition. The reasons why can be left till you have felt your way to conclusions by practical experience. Begin to learn by doing. Do what you like and not what is dictated by the best of rules. That is the only way to cultivate personal taste without running the risk of becoming a slave to theories. Study the theories when you are able to test them by previous experience. After drawing a few cottages in several positions, some railings, and other simple details, try to make some little pictures of them. If you find pleasant arrangements in nature, use them as they stand. But don't be dependent on accidents due to builders and gardeners.

There is only one thing you must never represent—the impossible. You cannot have one cottage lit from the left and another from the right in the same picture. Dare anything but inconsistency.

Plate VII consists of two compositions made from sketches shown on previous plates. The first is drawn with a soft pencil. The second is drawn with the same pencil, except the house and tree, for which a 4H was used, in order to give a greater effect of distance.

Plate X

Plate XI

CHAPTER IV

TREES

NOTHING in landscape causes so much trouble to the beginner (and to many others) as trees. A cottage, with its comparatively simple and straightforward arrangement of plane surfaces, is soon mastered; but the multiplicity of leaves and stems are often bewildering in their complexity. There is no gainsaying the fact that the drawing of trees is not easy. They have to be studied, and the only question is the most simple and systematic means.

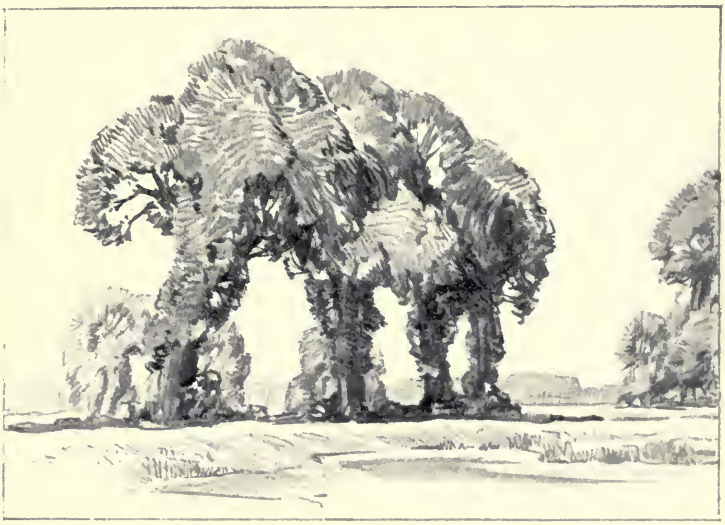
Obviously trees cannot be drawn exactly as they appear. We can see millions of leaves, but we cannot make enough spots! We can only suggest and leave the spectator to fill in the details (if he wants to) from his experience of real trees. We can best do this by indicating its salient characteristics—its differences from other kinds of trees. We cannot draw a tree but we can suggest its 'tree-iness.' The barest note of a dozen lines of, say, an elm, must not be mistaken for a willow. The things we *can* do —the proportions, general shape, masses, arrangement of stems—are our chief concerns. Often it is necessary to emphasize what we can do in order to suggest what we cannot do.

Let us take the elm and the willow and study them in this way (1) because they are found nearly everywhere, (2) they are rich in pictorial possibilities, (3) they are representatives of the

two most common types of tree to be found in this country. In other words, the study of these two kinds of trees will enable us to sketch any other kinds. The elm is distinguished by its massive strength: the willow by its delicate fragility. The general character of the elm is largely determined by the leaves; the willow by its stems. Often an elm may show hardly any trunk or stems: the willow reveals its construction through a thin tracery of leaves all over its surface.

Take the elm which is illustrated on Plate VIII. A perfect example, unhindered by contrary winds, bad soil, and the struggles with other trees, will take somewhat the form of Fig. 1, upright, symmetrical, rounded at the top, and spreading at the bottom, with a few holes between the dense masses of leaves, and a few bits of stems and trunk visible. But the most interesting forms for the sketcher are those which bear evidences of struggles with untoward circumstances—the gnarled trunk, naked roots, and forms twisted in its efforts to grow and retain its balance in spite of obstacles.

As this general solid shape is so pre-eminently characteristic, first studies might well be made in silhouette, and advanced, later, by the addition of two or three darker tones in flat patches as shown in the three drawings at the top of Plate VIII. In this way the sketcher will realize the two great essential characteristics—massiveness and roundness. It will surprise the uninitiated to discover that nearly all elms, except those quite near at hand, will need little more done to them. When the masses are rendered the job is almost done. A few indications of leafiness and evidences of waywardness will be sufficient to suggest all that is left out. But the nearer trees often call for more



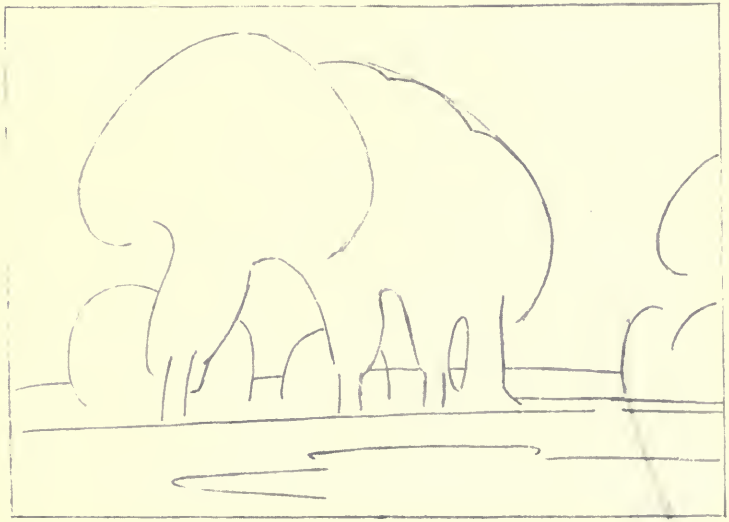


Plate XII

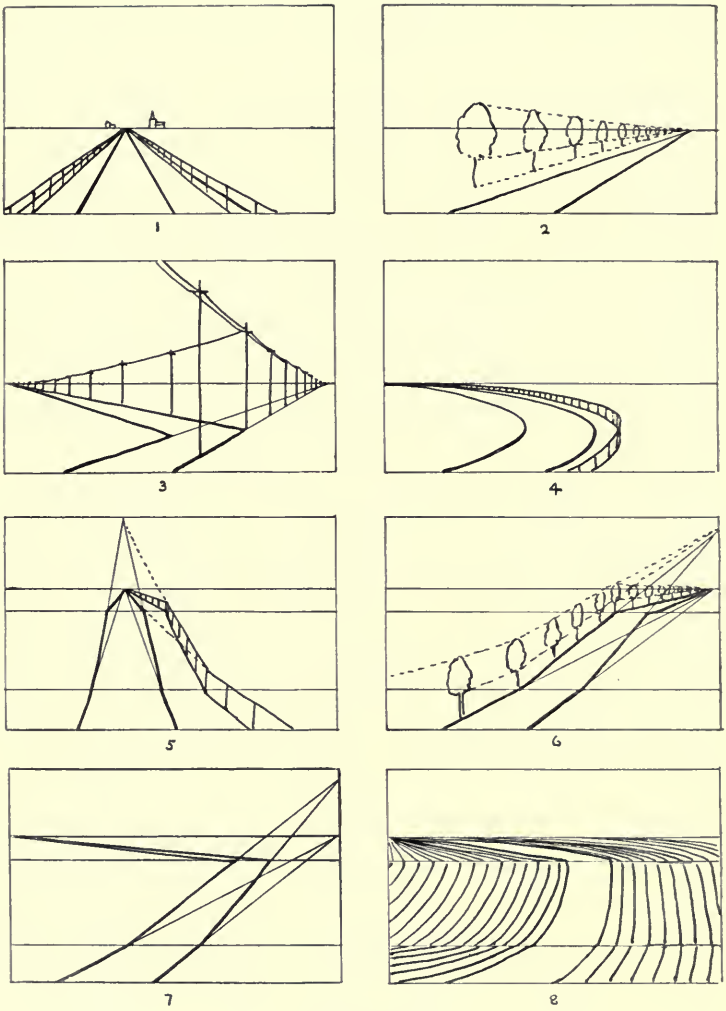


Plate XIII

detailed representation. The other sketches on Plate VIII show four sketches of the trunk of an old elm, drawn from different points of view, with a soft pencil on very coarse paper. This is one of the simplest ways to express the essential character of weather-beaten age in a few strokes.

Now for the willow. Plate IX consists of studies of the willow showing its totally different qualities. There are several kinds of willows. Some, at a distance, might almost be mistaken for poplars, and others for ash trees; but the sketcher will be drawn to the more distinctive varieties. Here the stems are the crux of the problem. By far the most thorough method of study is to first draw the tree when the stems are bare, then when the shoots appear, and later when in full leaf.

Unlike the dominating elms the willow is greatly influenced by circumstances; usually it is beaten in the struggle for free growth. It turns and twists and falls in almost every imaginable direction. For this reason alone it appeals to the artist who can do with it what almost he will without violating any natural law.

In this tree a knowledge of the way the leaves grow is unusually important. A few studies such as Fig. 1 will show why the edges of the trees look soft, pale, and indeterminate.

The other illustrations in this plate point to another important fact, viz.: that the willow admits of great latitude in composition. Stems can be drawn in almost any direction desired, but for the most part the drawing has to be in lines except on the old trunks, where powerful flat tones can often be used with great effect.

After drawing a dozen or so well-selected varieties of each tree in several positions, the sketcher should have acquired the power to be

able to modify the form at will without violating its essential character. He should then proceed to combine some of these elements with some of his former studies into pictorial arrangements. The available material is now ample for serious practical experiments in composition. The dark masses of elms will produce powerful contrasts when combined with white cottages, and give opportunities for trying several technical methods. The willows, with their delicate upright or spreading trunks, will, by a less powerful but equally interesting contrast, give life and movement to flat and heavy masses. Water, the natural accompaniment of willows, can be introduced with quietly telling effect.

Plate X is a picture consisting mainly of details, shown on Plate IX, varied to suit the needs of the composition. Three pencils were used: 4H for the distance, HB for the middle distance, and 4B for the foreground. Plate XI shows an arrangement consisting of willows with a background of elms. This drawing was done entirely with a 3B pencil and varying pressure. In each case the conscious aim has been restricted to two effects (1) strong contrasts of dark against light, and curved masses and straight surfaces, (2) striking variety by the opposition of horizontal lines with those that are more nearly vertical.

However eager the sketcher may be to continue with studies of other features from nature, he will be well advised to consolidate the present position by making the most he is able of the material already collected. He will then begin to see how he can make rearrangements on the spot. The failure to apply newly gained knowledge at suitable intervals is one of the chief causes why so many sketchers never emerge from the preparatory stage of picture making.

1

2

3

Plate XIV

Plate XV

CHAPTER V

DISTANCE

HITHERTO we have been concerned, for the most part, with the drawing and arrangement of objects near at hand. Here most sketchers stop, because here the real difficulties begin. But to do so is to lose most of the fascination of sketching. There is a thrilling sense of achievement in being able to represent miles of distance—meadows, forests, mountains, clouds—on a few square inches of paper. Every power that the artist needs is called into play—knowledge, construction, imagination, and technical skill. Conspicuous success in the higher reaches of the art may not come to many, but none save the timorous should hesitate to attempt it, or to think of giving in without a struggle.

Curiously enough, the chief difficulty is not in the subject but in the mind of the sketcher: a rooted dislike to face certain plain facts, and to act upon them. An illustration will make this point clear. A tiny stone, or perhaps a flower, seen near at hand may appear to be larger than a huge mountain twenty miles away. But we are so impressed by our knowledge of the actual size of the mountain that we tend to draw what we know and not what we see. To the end of their days many artists are the cockpit of a fight between knowledge and vision. Allied to this tendency is that of making distant objects too dark, too clear, and too detailed, as if no atmo-

sphere existed. Happy the sketcher who can set out armed with mental control; for he will be spared most of the blunders that fall to the common lot!

Let us approach the problem by easy stages. Plate XII shows two versions of a sketch of some elm trees in groups at different distances from the sketcher. The first group is so near that the tops almost reach the top of the picture. The next group, about half a mile away, though actually about the same size, appear to be only one-fifth the height. The third group is tiny.

A considerable effort of will is required to set out the proportions exactly as we see them and to refuse to modify these proportions when drawing. Measure the heights and widths of the large group again and again until there is no possible doubt of its correctness. Draw a few firm lines round the masses and then treat the other groups in the same way. When every proportion is right beyond question (including, of course, the horizontal lines and the edge of the pond) determine that they shall not be altered. Imagine, for the moment, that the upper sketch is the actual scene. The lower sketch shows the first stage of the drawing just described. Next note exactly the differences in tone. Compare the lighter parts of each mass with the parts in shade. Keep these relations firmly in mind from one end of the drawing to the other. Cover each mass with two flat tones, one for the lights and another for the shadows, and do the same with the ground and the reflections as shown in the first sketch.

Then, having gained full control over every wayward desire, start again and finish as in the upper sketch. Draw sketch after sketch in this way till the registration of relations become auto-

Plate XVI

matic. Do not imagine that this is a slow, mechanical, inartistic method. On the contrary it is quick because it is sound; and being sound it will soon enable you to concentrate on artistic expression unhindered by other considerations. Effects of distance to be obtained in this way are, necessarily, limited to a comparatively few subjects, because the surface of the earth is horizontal and is scarcely noticed. When we begin to consider undulating surfaces as the chief features in the pictures, scope and interest are greatly increased as well as the problems involved. How, for instance, can we represent distance if there are no trees or other objects situated at various distances of which we know the actual size? There are two methods which embrace most of the others: receding lines and receding tones.

The first of these methods needs some detailed explanation. Plate XIII, Figs. 1 to 4, illustrate four ways in which receding lines can create an illusion of distance. Each represents a road going from the front of the picture to the horizon, on a stretch of flat country. In Fig. 1 it goes straight back; in Fig. 2 it goes to the right at an angle of about 45 degrees; in Fig. 3 the road turns sharply at a right angle, and in Fig. 4 it takes the same directions but is curved. In every case the road vanishes to a point at the horizon. Neither of these pairs of lines would give the impression of distance, because we should not know they are intended to represent roads. But if the slightest other indication is given—railings, some trees, or houses on the horizon—then these two converging lines give to a space of $\frac{3}{4}$ in. high an impression of miles of distance.

The next four diagrams (5 to 8) show roads going over a tract of country partly flat (in front) for a few yards and then rising at an angle of

about 45 degrees, followed by another horizontal stretch to the horizon. Notice in each case that while the parallel lines on the horizontal surfaces vanish at the horizon, the other vanishes at a point higher up, and that the more the surface slopes the higher this point will be. If we imagine all these surfaces to be ploughed fields, as in Fig. 8, the effect of converging lines in creating a sense of distance is made doubly evident.

Now let us consider the other method—receding tones. It is possible to give a considerable effect of distance by three practically flat tones if, as before, there is something in the shape to indicate that a landscape is intended. The first two sketches on Plate XIV illustrate this point. In Fig. 1 there is some slight indication of distance, because we know that a mountain must be far away to look so small, and all doubt is removed by the receding lines of the road. In Fig. 2 the effect is greatly intensified by the receding tones only. In Fig. 3, by combining receding tones and receding lines, a sense of distance is conveyed with ease. Note, too, how the effect is completed by the gradated sky.

Plate XV is a still more effective combination of the two methods. Here an outline drawing alone would give a considerable effect of distance, because we conclude that the trees are more or less the same size; and when we see railings in the foreground as high as trees in the distance, and nearly as high as the hills beyond, the sense of space is easily suggested. The converging lines, too, lead the eye back over miles of fields. But the shading with four pencils—6H, F, 2B, and 6B—invests the picture with sunlight and atmosphere, and doubles the effect of recession.

One more example needs to be considered.

Plate XVII

Near objects are not always dark. On a day with passing clouds the nearest part may be in sunlight and the farthest in shadow, but the shadows will probably be darkest when nearest at hand. The sketches on Plates XVI and XVII show how all the methods are used, on an undulating country and on a mountain district, under such circumstances.

Do not regard these as artificial methods invented to give certain effects ; they are records of everyday happenings in nature correctly estimated and intelligently used.

CHAPTER VI

CLOUDS, WATER, AND REFLECTIONS

TO most sketchers clouds are the most fascinating and the most tantalizing part of his subject. At one moment they may make the picture; at the next they may mar it. They move and change with bewildering rapidity. A single cloud and its shadow can transform a tame and characterless subject into one of extraordinary beauty. Plate XVI is an example of their importance and value. With a plain sky and bereft of shadows the subject would have but little pictorial possibilities. In this case the clouds serve three purposes. They give interest to the large sky, add variety to the form of the land, and convey an impression of distance. The last of these purposes is one that is often overlooked.

Clouds should be regarded as a matter of special and separate study. Their characteristic forms should be learned so that at any time a cloud can be designed to fit any part of a picture. Naturally the student will begin with the still, or slowly-moving, examples until he has grasped their construction and has gained sufficient technical facility to be able to draw them swiftly from memory.

By far the most effective medium for sketching clouds is white, black, and grey chalks on grey paper, recommended for tone sketches in Chapter VIII. The crumbling quality of soft

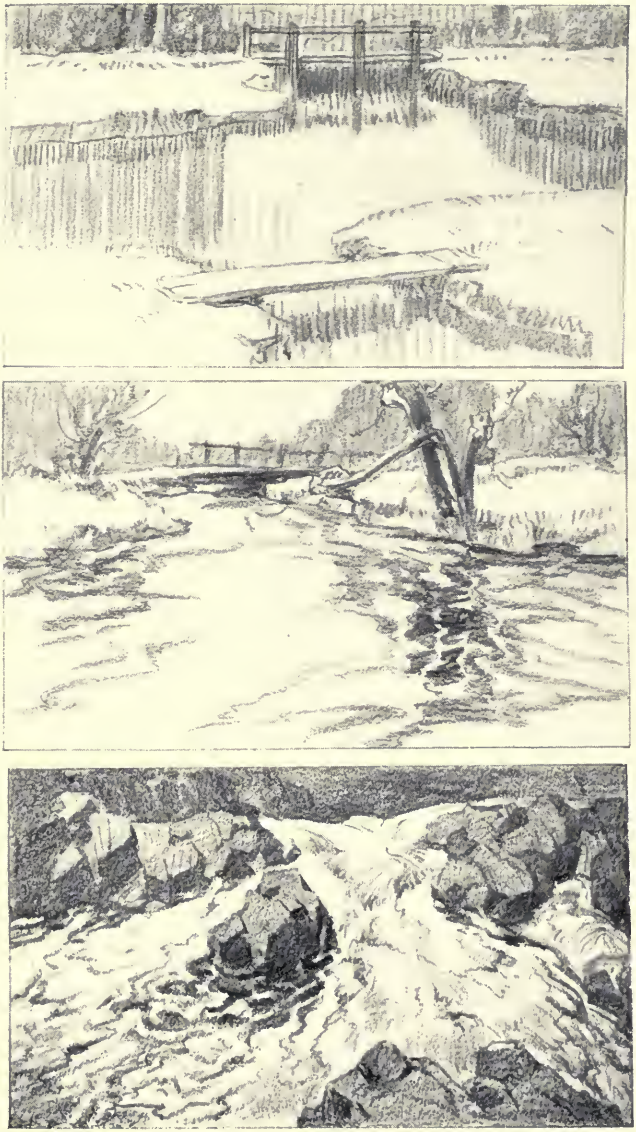


Plate XVIII

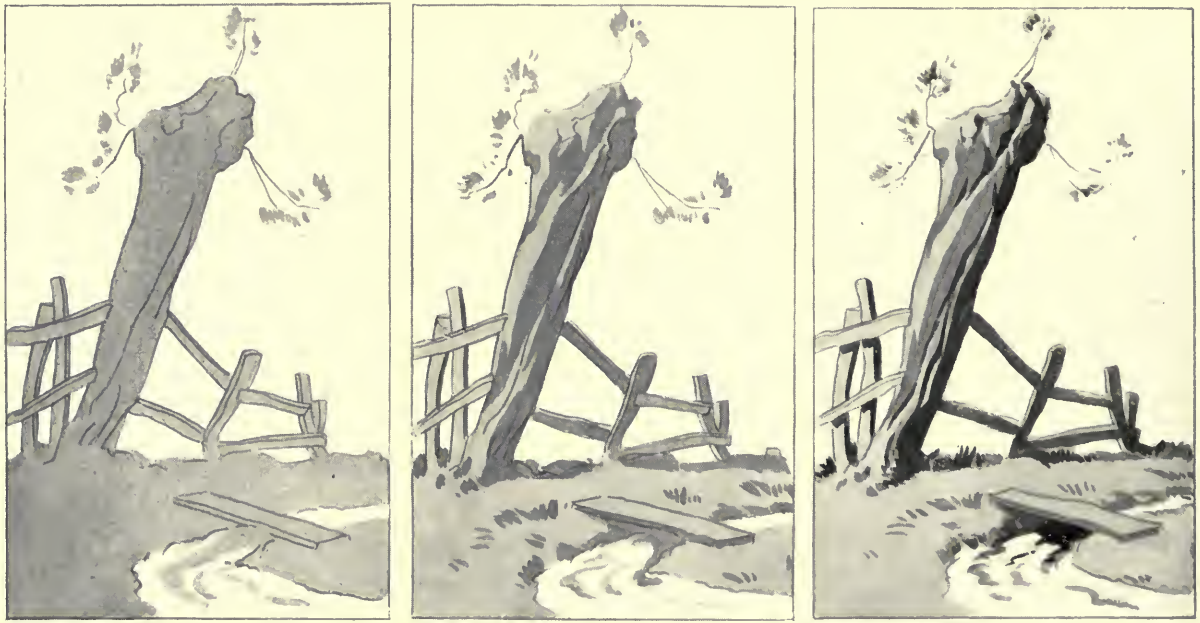


Plate XIX

chalk when pressed lightly on a rather coarse paper gives exactly the loose indeterminate edge of thin clouds, and the crisp sunlit brilliance of the thicker one can be well rendered by harder pressure. The example on Plate XVI should point to an effective method of study. Two methods of rendering clouds with pencil are shown—the one on Plate XVI was drawn with a soft pencil on coarse paper, and the other, on Plate XVII with a hard pencil on soft paper. The latter method would take too long for an elaborate arrangement of clouds unless the drawing is done from memory or from a chalk sketch. Considerations of composition must be left to another book dealing with the construction of a landscape ; but for the beginner it is enough to try various arrangements of clouds, use those which seem most satisfactory, and note the treatment in fine pictures.

Water, both still and moving, also demands separate consideration. The study of water is almost wholly the study of reflections. There is no need, at this stage, to go laboriously into the scientific aspect of the shape of reflections. For the present it is enough to draw as correctly and expressively what is seen and to note the differences between the form of the reflections and the objects reflected. Above all, the sketcher should avoid certain conventional methods of representation as substitutes for exact observation, particularly in moving water. An unthinking display of strokes and scribbles will not do. Every line must have a definite meaning. Reflections in still water are best expressed by horizontal or upright lines, if lines are used at all, as shown in the top sketch on Plate XVIII. But they must not be drawn indiscriminately. Every reflection in still water has its shape

and needs to be studied as carefully as the object reflected.

Moving water cannot be represented; it can only be suggested. Here it is the movement that has to be expressed. Generally the strokes should follow the form of the ripples as shown in the other two sketches.

Plate XX

Plate XXI

CHAPTER VII

WASH DRAWING

BY this time the reader will have discovered that, although the pencil and white paper can produce a great variety and a wide range of effects, there are decided limitations. To make a complete detailed tone drawing is a slow process, unless the drawing is very small. He will realize the absurdity of covering large areas with flat, or nearly flat, tones by means of thousands of strokes when the same effect can be produced much more quickly and easily by a few washes. In sketching speed is often an essential condition, particularly when the effects are fleeting. This chapter, therefore, is devoted to methods of sketching in wash.

Broadly speaking, there are two methods, (1) by transparent washes on white paper, and (2) by opaque washes on white or tinted paper. The first method can be applied in several ways; the one explained here is not necessarily the best, because the selection is largely a matter of personal temperament. But it is certainly the simplest, and arises most readily from the previous studies.

If the reader has had no experience in laying washes, a little preliminary practice, before attempting direct sketches from nature will save much fruitless failure and needless irritation. Make a clear outline drawing of the sketch shown in Fig. 1 on Plate XIX. Mix a very pale wash

of black. Damp the paper with a small sponge and dry lightly with blotting paper. Carry a flat wash over the whole of the paper. Mix a slightly darker tone of black and when the first wash is dry cover the whole surface, except the sky and the water, with a still darker wash, and paint a portion of the trees, railings, and plank as shown in Fig. 2. Continue the process with a succession of darker tones till the sketch is like the final stage, as shown in Fig. 3. This is called a tinted drawing, because the outline remains as an important part of the sketch when completed.

Now take a more completed subject, Fig. 1, Plate XX, and draw with a faint outline. In this case some of the washes are not flat, but gradate to a fainter tone or fade away altogether. Gradation can be most easily effected by using two brushes. Paint the darker portion first. If the wash needs to be slightly gradated, mix a paler wash, before commencing, and add it with the second brush, as quickly as possible. For more sudden gradations use a clean damp brush, and drag the colour already applied as far as is required. Or, begin with a fainter wash and add the dark. In some cases it is necessary to begin with clean water and add the tone. Speaking generally, it is easiest to gradate from dark to light and from the top downwards, but sometimes the opposite plan is compelled by circumstances. Examples of each occur in Plate XX, where the picture is shown in two stages.

Transparent wash drawing has one serious disadvantage : it cannot express, except by extraordinary skill, small patches of light surrounded by dark tones, such as flashing ripples in dark water, light flowers in a meadow, and glistening wet leaves on a dark tree. When the effect of a sketch depends largely upon some such features

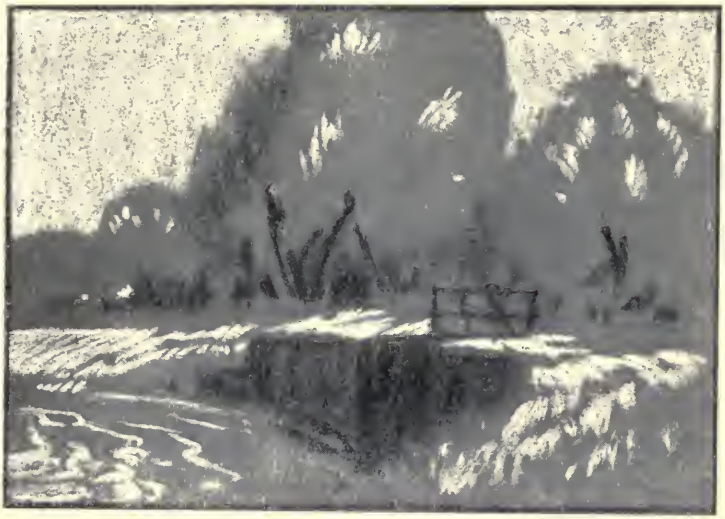


Plate XXII

Plate XXIII

the use of opaque washes is called for ; for when transparent pigment is mixed with sufficient Chinese White, it will be unaffected by the tone on which it is painted. Plate XXI shows a sketch in two stages which could not be done with transparent wash only ; and the reader is recommended to paint this or some similar subject as an experiment.

Mix four washes in four saucers. Make mixture No. 1 with Chinese White and a touch of Black. To mixture No. 2 add a little more Black ; to mixture No. 3 a considerable amount, and to mixture No. 4 only a small quantity of White. Paint a patch of each colour side by side on a spare piece of paper and let them dry. Each will appear slightly lighter than when painted. Use these as guides while making the sketch.

First cover the whole surface with a flat wash of No. 2 and allow it to dry. Or, if obtainable, use a grey paper of this tone. Then paint the sky, lights on grass, water, etc., with No. 1. Next paint parts of the trees, lock, etc., with No. 3 as in the first stage. When this is dry add the highest lights with White, the darkest parts with Black, as well as various details needed to complete the picture as in the second stage.

This is the most elementary form of opaque wash drawing, because each wash is quite flat. The graduating of opaque washes by adding White or Black is a far more difficult matter and needs a good deal of practice ; and until a considerable amount of facility has been gained it would not be wise to attempt the method in direct sketches from nature.

CHAPTER VIII

CHALK DRAWING

WITHOUT doubt the simplest and most effective method of sketching in tone is by means of black, white, and grey chalks of different tones on grey paper. By varying pressure every variety of tone, from white to black can be obtained with white and black only, but as sharp touches can be made only with considerable pressure, two or three greys are sometimes necessary, and these are only obtainable in pastel form. With a medium grey paper, white, pale grey, dark grey, and black pastels, an elaborate and complicated tone sketch becomes a matter of comparative simplicity.

In order that the reader may compare the two methods on equal terms, the same subject shown in opaque colour on Plate XXI is also shown on Plate XXII, drawn with white, black, and light grey pastels with dark grey paper. Note first the prevailing tone of the subject. In this case the largest part is nearly the tone of mixture No. 3. For that reason choose a paper of this tone. Cover the sky with a rather faint pressure of the pale grey pastel, using the side of a short piece. Vary the pressure to get the necessary gradation, particularly around the trees. Indicate the main dark features, such as the trees and the opening in the bridge, with varying pressure of the black pastel, as shown in the first stage. Complete the sketch with strong crisp touches of white,

Plate XXIV

pale grey, and black, till it appears like the second stage.

Compare this drawing with the previous one from the points of view of speed, ease, and effect, and there can be little doubt of the greater value of the pastel chalks for this purpose. The cloud study on Plate XXIII is an example of the only way in which such a complicated mass of form, tone, structure, and swift movement can be expressed in a few minutes, while the impression is most vivid. Two chalks only were used for the sky—white and dark grey—on a medium grey paper. For the rest black and a few touches of white were required. The subtle distinctions were produced by varied pressure.

The only disadvantage of soft chalk as a sketching medium is its fragility, as any form of fixing tends to alter the tones. But if it is not preserved, such a sketch is of great service as a preliminary note to discover relative tones, to record fleeting effects, and to decide upon the final form of the composition. Next to this method the most speedy and expressive way of rendering both line and tone is by the use of the carpenter's pencil. The lead can be sharpened so as to make a line more than a quarter of an inch broad or as thin as a hair. A few strokes with the side of the lead will cover a large space with a flat tone of any intensity. By varying the position of the lead strokes of varying widths can be made as easily as with a pen. Winsor & Newton's oval sketching pencils in four grades, HB, B, BB, and 4B, will prove invaluable. The illustrations on Plate XXIV will give some idea of their value and composition.

There is no space to go further into these matters here. But it is hoped that a sufficient

introduction to a profitable method of approach has been given which will be continued by reference to more detailed books upon the subject, to fine pictures and, of course, by a careful study of nature. It is hoped too that, rightly understood and applied, the hints and information given here will remove many of the obstacles which beset the path of the beginner and will prove to be of practical service at every step in his career.

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